Che bellissimi!

Italian Illustrated Books (15th—18th Centuries)

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library *May 6—July 5, 1985*

CHE BELLISSIMI!

Italian Illustrated Books
of the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

An Exhibition on the Occasion of
the International Conference on Italian
Toronto, May 6-10, 1985

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
University of Toronto
May 6 - July 5, 1985

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One of Italy's greatest achievements has been in the area of visual arts: painting, sculpture, architecture and book design. It is for this reason that the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library has chosen to exhibit some of its more important holdings of Italian illustrated books on the occasion of the International Conference on Italian being held in Toronto, May 6-10, 1985.

The first printers in Italy were mostly non-Italian; for example, Konrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz came from Germany and Nicolas Jensen from France. Once south of the Alps, however, these printers produced books which differed greatly from the works they were accustomed to seeing in their home lands. Whereas the northern output tended to be largely theological or legal in nature, in the South these printers seemed to concentrate more on the classics, and treatises by contemporary Italian scholars and scientists, as well as "popular" works by early Italian poets, such as Dante or Petrarch. In addition, novels, ballads and tales of romance or chivalry were produced for "light" reading.

Once established, the art of printing spread rapidly from town to town. Fifteenth century Italy was not a united country and each of the rulers of the innumerable city-states was eager to show how cultured he was by summoning printers to set up their presses in his towns. This is not to say that the early products of these presses were popular among the upper classes. Witness the bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci in his description of the library of Federigo da Montefeltro: "In quella libraria i libri tutti sono belli in superlativo grado, tutti iscritti a penna, e non v'è ignuno a stampa, che se ne sarebbe vergognato". [1] This dislike of printed books even applied to those with illustrations. For the upper classes, nothing could match the illuminated manuscript.

Despite this lack of support from its patrons, the art of printing spread and quite rapidly each town had its own style of printing and, more to the point, its own style of illustrating the works produced there. Many times it is possible to look at an early Italian woodcut and establish the place of printing by this evidence alone. The Italians also brought another innovation to the art of illustration. Northern illustrations often focussed on explaining the text; the Italians tended to see each page as a whole, and treated the illustration as an ornament rather than just a way of clarifying the treatise or story. Florence has the reputation of having produced the most beautiful woodcuts of this period, but unfortunately they are also the rarest, having been used mostly in books of an ephemeral nature. Each of the early examples shown here, however naïve, has a certain grace that can not fail to charm us today.

In 1530, Charles V was crowned Emperor of Italy, and the era of the independent city-state was over. It is generally considered that the great days of the woodcut were over at the same time, but this method of

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[1] In this library all the books are beautiful to a fault, all are written by hand, not a single one is printed, that would be shameful.

illustration was still very much used until the turn of the century. There was, however, a change, a shift in style, that may have been brought about by competition from metal-engraving. The outline cut which characterized the "Primitive" was replaced by a design with parallel shading and by another innovation, white-line engraving, which had its origins in Florence, was used by the English engraver, Thomas Bewick, and is still used today. In white-line engraving the design is cut in white lines against a black ground, instead of black against white. It has some affinity with copper-engraving in method.

Some experts feel that the introduction of toning and shading led to the decline of Italian book illustration, but one other thing must be taken into consideration. During the first half of the sixteenth century, there was an enormous increase in the number of books being printed, and this meant that a greater number of illustrations and illustrators were called for. In order to meet this demand groups of engravers were organized and they, of course, followed slavishly the designs put in front of them.

This is not to say that no good illustrated books were printed in the second half of the sixteenth century. Printers such as Giolito, Marcolini and Valgrisi managed to turn out splendid examples of Italian illustrated books. Freshness and inspiration did not necessarily pass away with increased book production, and among the most successful illustrations of this era were the representational ones which belonged to books on architecture, anatomy, costume, or those of symbols, such as Alciati's long-lived Emblemata which first appeared in Augsburg in 1531.

In the seventeenth century most book design and printing was of a low standard, but it was also a period when magnificent books were commissioned by rich patrons. Italy at this time produced a great many large format volumes dealing with opera, architecture or festivals. The latter were especially popular, as their splendour would reflect glory on the patron. The French engraver, Jacques Callot, did his first illustrations at the beginning of this century for the funeral book for the Queen of Spain printed in Florence in 1612.

We find too that this is the period of the magnificent engraved title page. At times more care seems to have gone into these than into the other illustrations in the same book. One favourite device was a banner bearing the title, supported by mythological beasts; another the often severe architectural framework. Other designs incorporate an illustration of the text with the title, as a sort of foretaste of the book's contents. At times the lettering may be overwhelmed by the design surrounding it, obscuring the very thing the reader might find important. Occasionally a book might be engraved throughout, thus providing a homogeneity between text and illustration.

Many find it easy to dismiss the seventeenth century as "Baroque" and therefore despise the overblown decorations so typical of the period. But let us remember that book illustration often gives us glimpses of how people regarded themselves, what things they considered important or interesting and how they wished to be remembered.

From the Baroque, we turn to the Rococo of the eighteenth century. The main object of the illustrated book of this period was to give pleasure. Therefore lightness of touch, gaiety and harmony of design were important. Head- and tail-pieces, vignettes and decorated initials all had to complement each other as well as the text.

The technique used for most of this century was a combination of etching with engraving on copper-plate, producing a grey, tonal effect which blended well with the large white margins, used so effectively by the typographer-printer Bodoni of Parma. The texts of his editions may not have been of the utmost accuracy, for he was more concerned with design than with contents, declaring, "Je ne veux que du magnifique et je ne travaille pas pour le vulgaire" [2] but the elegance of his books is undeniable.

Other cities might have their elegant printers but it was Venice, now in its brightest hour as Europe's pleasure city, that produced without a doubt the most beautifully decorated books. Canaletto, Tiepolo and Guardi, among others, were all working in Venice at this time, and they very much influenced the work of that city's engravers. We still find the typical seventeenth-century books being printed, the funeral orations, epithalamia and festival books, many with the elaborate head- and tail-pieces, delicate vignettes and floral borders so popular then, but in the eighteenth century we also see a revived interest in the classics. This era can be characterized by Albrizzi's superb edition of Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata. This monumental work with etchings by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, founder of the Venetian School of painting, has been called Italy's most beautiful book of the century and is a fitting end to this exhibition.

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2 I only want magnificence and I do not work for common people.

CASE 1: FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Dante Alighieri. La commedia. Venice : Petrus de Plasiis, 1491.

Dante's aim in this most famous of his works was to exhort, rebuke and reprove; to form men's characters by teaching them what course of life would meet with reward, and what with penalty, in the hereafter. The hero's world is peopled by those he knows personally or by reputation. Metaphysical or theological discussions take the place of adventures or incidents in the plot. It is thought that Dante was the first to use terza rime for this new style of sustained narrative.

The arrangement of the print and illustration still reminds us of an illuminated manuscript. Some initials are woodcut, others have room left around them for rubrication by hand. The woodcut illustrations are also still lacking in fine detail.

Ketham, Joannes de. The Fasciculus medicinae ... Milan : R. Lier, 1924.

The Fisher Library, unfortunately, does not possess the 1491 edition of the first medical text with original figures, but does hold this 1924 facsimile. It is thought that Joannes de Ketham was a German physician, who compiled his text and pictures from various sources. The latter are mostly conventional illustrations: the blood-letting man marked with the best sites for venesection, the zodiac man with figures of the zodiac connected with the various viscera, the wound man, showing where arteries should be ligated after wounds of various kinds and the pregnant woman (shown) with a pre-Vesalian foetus in utero. All these figures have been traced to manuscripts of much earlier periods and some to countries such as Persia and India. None is based on actual observations or dissections.

Barbieri, Filippo de'. Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Hieronymi et Augustini. [Rome] : Sixtus Riessinger, [ca. 1482]

Barbieri was a Dominican monk who became famous as an orator and philosopher. It is thought that this compilation of his works was issued to serve as a teaching text.

Shown are some examples of early Roman book illustration. Note especially the architectural borders and the printer's coat of arms in the upper right hand corner of the "Sibilla Persica".

Paccioli, Luca. Sūma de arithmetica geometria proporzioni & proporzionalia. Venetijs : Paganinus de Paganinis, 10-20 Nov., 1494.

Paccioli, a Franciscan monk, made an important contribution to the revival of science, and in particular to the study of mathematics. De summa arithmetica, as this work came to be known, is his principal opus and was reprinted many times in the sixteenth century.

Also exhibited in this case are woodcuts removed from the edition of Dante's La commedia published in Venice in 1497, and republished in slightly altered form in the Ashendene Press edition of 1904-1905.

CASE 2: SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Paccioli, Luca. Diuina proportione. Venetiis : Paganinus de Paganinis, 1509.

The subject of proportion was one that greatly intrigued the artists of the Renaissance, and Paccioli, better known as a mathematician, was one of the major early Italian theorists on the design of the alphabet. He in turn was a great influence on later authors dealing with the subject: Fanti, Dürer, Tory. The Divina Proportione is an early instance of the pervasive influence of Leonardo da Vinci; he designed the illustrations for this work, and his name appears again and again in the text. The original edition is displayed, open at a page demonstrating the correct proportions for a letter of the alphabet and a male head.

Ovidius Naso, Publius. Le trasformationi, di M. Lodovico Dolce. Vinegia : G. Giolito de Ferrari, 1561.

Lodovico Dolce was the editor of the Giolito printing house, and as such was responsible for editing a great many of the classic texts. He was also a major dramatist in his own right. The Giolito press seems to have set the fashion for small figures in the illustrations, as can be seen in these woodcuts. The artist is unknown.

Biringucci, Vannuccio. De la pirotechnia, libri X. [Venetia : Stampata per V. Roffinella, ad instantia di C. Nauo] 1540.

Very little is known about the life of Biringucci, a Sienese noble, but his famous work on pyrotechnics appeared in many Italian editions and was translated into French and English. It was written for the practising metallurgist, foundryman, dyer, type-founder, glass-maker, and maker of gunpowder, fireworks and chemicals used in warfare.

This first edition has eighty-four woodcuts in the text and is considered a landmark in the development of Italian science.

Scappi, Bartolomeo. Opera. [Venetia : M. Tramezzino, 1570]

One of the most famous early Italian cookery books written by the cook to Pope Pius V, and considered a classic in the field. The plate chosen for exhibition represents the various dishes and wines being brought by servants to the examiners for tasting before being sent in to the Cardinals sitting in Conclave in 1549.

Vesalius, Andreas. De humani corporis fabrica, libri septem. Venetiis : F.F. Senensem & J.C. Germanum, 1568.

Vesalius, the most commanding figure in European medicine after Galen and before Harvey, in one giant step brought the study of anatomy into the light of modern science. The Fabrica was a complete anatomical and physiological study of every part of the human body, based on first hand examination through dissection and on the author's experience as the public prosector of the medical school at Padua. Vesalius was only twenty-nine at the time of the first edition (1543). This edition is exhibited because it is unusual and rare, having been printed in Venice without a licence. The text and marginal notes are taken from the revised Basel edition of 1555, while the woodcut plates by Johann Crieger are slightly reduced copies of those in that same edition.

Bojardo, Matteo Mario, conte di Scandiano. Tutti li libri de Orlando inamorato. [Mediolani, 1539]

Almost all Bojardo's works, and especially his great poem Orlando inamorato, were composed for the amusement of the Dukes d'Este and their court, at which he spent most of his life after graduating from the University of Ferrara as a doctor in law and philosophy. This epic combines the Carolingian and Arthurian traditions and is considered one of the most important poems in Italian literature. Undoubtedly it inspired Ariosto's Orlando Furioso.

CASE 3: SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Accademia degli Occulti, Brescia. Rime de gli academici occvlti, con le loro imprese et discorsi. Brescia : Vincenzo di Sabbio, 1568.

This emblem book, illustrated by the famous artist and engraver, Bartolomeo da Brescia, is the earliest in a series of similar works published by Italian academies. These works combined emblematic devices with poetical works and dissertations by Academy members to promote literary, philosophical and historical studies. The discourses about the devices which accompany the poems are by Bartolomeo Arnigo.

Venice (Republic, to 1797) Laws, statutes, etc. Volvmen statvtorvm, legvm, ac ivrivm D. Venetorvm. Venetiis [1586]

Displayed is an early example of Justice, not as yet blind-folded.

Doni, Antonio Francesco. I marmi. Vinegia: Francesco Marcolini, 1552.

The first edition of this collection of dialogues took its name from the marble steps in front of the Duomo at Florence, where these conversations supposedly took place. Doni was one of the founders of the Accademia Peregrina, aware of the literary and artistic currents of the period, and made these the subjects of his dialogues.

The woodcuts in this edition are attributed to Giuseppe Salviati, who belonged to the circle of Titian.

Contile, Luca. Ragionamento ... sopra la proprietà delle imprese con le particolari de gli Academici affidati ... Pavia : [G. Bartoli] 1574.

The development of emblem literature seems to have arrived in Italy at the time of the French invasions of the sixteenth century. It may be difficult for us to appreciate fully the fashion for emblem books, but nothing is better suited to bring home to us the tastes that prevailed in this century.

In his Ragionamento Contile bemoans the fact that modern Italian writers have not written of the ornaments that were to be seen in the conquering armies. While he did not supply this want, Contile did write one of the most complete and useful treatises for the history of emblem literature. It includes descriptions of the device, motto and assumed name of each member of the Accademia Affidata of Pavia, with a handsome engraving accompanying each dissertation.

Ruscelli, Girolamo. Precetti della militia moderna, tanto per mare qvanto per terra. Venetia : Gli heredi di M. Sessa, 1583.

The list of works by this Italian humanist is extensive and of amazing variety. Here he writes on how best to conduct warfare, how to maintain an orderly camp and everything on the art of bombing. Shown are illustrations of a measuring device and a primitive bomb.

CASE 4: SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Ariosto, Lodovico. Orlando furioso. Venetia : Vicenzo Valgrisi, 1556.
----------. Orlando furioso. Vinegia : Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1550.

Of all the works of Ariosto, the most solid monument to his fame is the Orlando furioso, which by far eclipsed the innumerable romance poems which flooded Italy during this period. Ariosto began to write his great poem in about 1503, and up to the moment of his death in 1533, never ceased to correct and improve both his style and the subject. The rare first Valgrisi edition, and one of the finest from that press, was edited by Girolamo Ruscelli who claimed to have based the text on Ariosto's own corrections. This is now disputed. The woodcut illustrations are famous in their own right, cut after designs by Dosso Dossi. Each canto has one woodcut only, which shows, in receding planes, the events that take place in that section.

This style of illustration was first found in an early Giolito edition of Orlando and was sometimes carried to extremes, especially considering the typical small Giolito format. We show a rare example from the Giolito press, where there is only one scene per illustration.

Serlio, Sebastiano. Libro primo [- quinto] d'architettura. [Vinetia : C. de Nicolini da Sabbio, ad instantia de M. Sessa, 1551] .

Serlio, born in 1475, was a contemporary of Michelangelo and an architect and architectural theorist. He was also a painter, and very much interested in the problems of perspective. His work was not the first printed book on architecture, but was the first great hand-book on the subject. It became a sort of "do-it-yourself" text that could be used by men of wealth and their stonemasons and builders, particularly as there were so many illustrations. Indeed, it is one of the earliest books in which the text was used to explain the illustrations rather than vice versa.

Vitruvius Pollio. De architectvra libri decem. Venetiis : Apud F. Franciscum Senensem & I. Crugher Germanum, 1567.

Very little is known about this Roman architect, except what can be gathered from his own writings. He may have served in Africa at the time of Julius Caesar as a military engineer, but this is uncertain. He appears not to have enjoyed a great reputation as an architect in his own day.

The oldest copy of the manuscript of De architectura dates from the tenth century, and was rediscovered at the Monastery of St. Gall, after having been considered lost for many centuries. From the early Renaissance down to comparatively recent times the influences of this treatise have been remarkable. Palladio, Michelangelo and Bramante, among others, were careful students of the work of Vitruvius, which through them influenced the architecture of almost all the European countries.

We show the first edition of Vitruvius with Daniel Barbaro's commentary in Latin. The woodcut illustrations are attributed to Johann Crieger and based on those to be found in the Marcolini edition of the previous year. The bird's-eye view of Venice first appears in this edition.

Tagliacozzi, Gaspare. De curtorum chirurgia per insitionem, libri dvo. Venetiis : Apud R. Meiettum, 1597.

Tagliacozzi revived the operation of rhinoplasty, which had been during the fifteenth century in the hands of a Sicilian family of plastic surgeons, the Brancas of Catania. The Church did not approve of such operations, as they were seen to be meddling with God's handiwork, and after his death, Tagliacozzi's body was removed from the convent where he was buried and put into unconsecrated ground.

The woodcut exhibited shows a damaged nose, moulded into shape.

Bocchi, Achille. Symbolicarum qvaestionvm de vniverso genere, quas serio ludebat, libri qvinque. Bononiae : Apud Societatem typ. Bononiensis, 1574.

This is another example of the emblem book that was so popular from the early sixteenth century to the beginnings of the nineteenth. This second edition of Bocchi's work is considered important because it has the original copper engravings by Giulio Bonasone, retouched by Agostino Carracci. Bocchi was one of the first emblemists.

CASE 5: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Bonarelli della Rovere, Prospero. Il Solimano: tragedia. [Firenze : Nella stamperia di P. Cecconelli, 1620]

Of all of Bonarelli's work, this drama is perhaps the best known and is one of the most celebrated tragedies of seventeenth-century Italian literature.

The edition displayed is the first authorized one published in Venice in 1620. The etchings by Jacques Callot are noteworthy in the history of scenography. It has been pointed out that the fountains which appear in the middle ground of the plates (here somewhat obscured) were inspired by actual fountains near the Ponte Vecchio in Florence. It would have been interesting to see the actual staging of this fire on a seventeenth-century stage.

Andreini, Giovanni Battista. L'Adamo. Milano : G. Bordoni, 1613.

The author of this sacred play was the son of Francesco and Isabella Andreini, the most famous actors of their age. It is said that Milton saw this play during his travels in Italy and was influenced by it while writing Paradise Lost. The engravings are by C.A. Procaccino of Bologna.

Aleotti, Giovanni Battista. Difesa per riparare alla sommersione del polesine di S. Giorgio, & alla rouina dello stato di Ferraro. Ferrara : V. Baldini, 1601.

Architect and engineer, Aleotti spent 22 years in the service of Duke Alfonso II d'Este. He worked mostly in Ferrara, where he was responsible for the construction of several churches and palaces.

The Difesa is an early work on the subject of flood and river control and is interesting for its delicate illustrations, several in two colours.

Verdizotti, Giovanni Maria. Cento favole bellissime de i più illustri antichi, e moderni autori greci, e latini. Venetia : F. Ginammi, 1661.

Many of the early engravings were based in design on early woodcuts, however in this book of fables there is a sign of another technique. Some of its plates seem to have been based on pen drawings. The book is open at the fable of the tortoise and the hare.

Coppola, Giovanni Carlo. Le nozze degli dei. Firenze : A Massi & L. Landi, 1637.

The Duke of Ossuna and Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany, both wanted Coppola at their courts, but this famous poet/cleric preferred to retreat to the country and live a solitary existence. Pope Urbino made him Bishop of Muro in 1643 where he died in 1652.

Le nozze degli dei was written, as were many of the Italian plays of this period, for a festive occasion, that of the marriage of Ferdinand II de Medici. The illustrations were etched by Stefano della Bella, after designs by Alfonso Parigi. Della Bella was a pupil of Jacques Callot, and one of the most outstanding Italian engravers of the seventeenth century. Compare this fire scene to the one in Il Solimano. Both would have presented challenges for the set designer.

Alciati, Andrea. Emblemata. Patauij : Apud P.P. Tozzium, 1621.

Primarily a jurist, Alciati was one of the first to interpret civil law by the history, languages and literature of antiquity and to undertake original research instead of depending on the interpretations of the glossators. He published many legal works and did some annotations on Tacitus, but the book for which he is most remembered and admired is his Emblemata.

An emblem may be understood as a "speaking picture". It conveyed a literary conceit or moral precept in pictorial form whose meaning was made clear by a motto, and in many cases, by an accompanying verse. This combination of picture and explanatory verse turned a literary genre into an art form.

This collection of moral sayings in Latin verse was issued in a great many editions and translated into French, Italian and Spanish. In the edition exhibited, the offensive emblem LXXX is again introduced after having been expurgated since 1574.

CASE 6: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Ripa, Cesare. Della novissima iconologia. Padova : P.P. Tozzi, 1624-25.

Ripa was basically the initiator of the volumes of allegories called iconologies. Iconology took the place of the popular emblem books of the previous century. They supplied artists with models and served to educate young people. From Ripa's work derived a great many others, the most curious of which are Giovan Francesco Guerrieri's paintings in the piano nobile of the Palazzo Borghese in Rome and Francesco Pianta's powerful carvings in the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice. The seventeenth century saw the decline in quality of illustration for this type of book.

The edition exhibited is an enriched version of the Tozzi printing of 1618.

Pucci, Antonio. Storia della regina d'Oriente. Lucca : F. Marescondola [1666?]

This book has been included to remind us that not all the seventeenth-century books were as sophisticated as one might think. This one definitely is a throwback to the early sixteenth century, and is very reminiscent of the Florentine "Rappresentazione".

Casserio, Giulio. De vocis avditvsq; organis historia anatomia. [Ferrariae] : Excudebat V. Baldinus, 1600-1601.

Casserio was a distinguished anatomist at the medical school at Padua, and one of William Harvey's teachers. In 1600 he published this work on the anatomy of the organs of hearing. The title page (exhibited) with its rather grisly surround of skeletons is an example of a design that takes on a life of its own, to the extent that it overpowers the lettering.

Tasso, Torquato. La Gerusalemme liberata. Genova : G. Pavoni, 1617.

Tasso took Virgil as his model when composing this poem. He wanted to ennoble the Italian epic by preserving strict unity of plot and by heightening the poetic diction. His own bias was for romance and he threw himself into the romantic passages which hold our interest more than the scenes of battle, religious conclaves and ceremonies. His portraits of the women are especially successful and the names of Armida, Clorinda and Erminia became familiar throughout Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In this edition the illustrations are by Bernardo Castello, and their ornateness very much reflects the taste of the times. Each canto is introduced by a full page engraving by Camillo Congio after Castello's designs set in a massive frame, similar to a picture mounted in a wall niche.

Galilei, Galileo. Dialogo ... sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo Tolemaico e Copernicano. Florence : G.B. Landini, 1632.

For writing this work, Galileo was imprisoned, tortured and sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life. The work remained on the Index librorum prohibitorum until 1823. Nevertheless his teaching totally reversed the trend of science early in the seventeenth century and made the heliocentric system a commonplace. It was thought that most copies of this work were burned at the time of his imprisonment, but it has now been ascertained that many escaped destruction.

The beautiful frontispiece by Stefano della Bella shows Aristotle conversing with Ptolemy and Copernicus.

CASE 7: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Pulci, Luigi. Morgante maggiore. Venezia : A. Zatta, 1784.

This poem is a parody on the old romances of chivalry. The poem was originally recited by Pulci as it was composed, canto by canto, at the court of Lorenzo de Medici, and tells the story of a giant converted to Christianity who accompanies Roland on his adventures.

The edition shown is from the Parnaso italiano series and has very delicate etchings.

Rossi, Giovanni Gherardo de. Scherzi poetici e pittorici. Parma : Co' tipi Bodoniani, 1795.

This is one of four editions dated 1795 featuring the engravings by Giuseppe Tekeira on the subject of love, based on the designs of Francesco Rosaspina. It is unusual for the extreme simplicity of the cuts and presents an interesting contrast to the style used by Piranesi and the Parnaso italiano illustrations.

Piranesi, Giovanni Battista. Opere varie di architettura ... Roma [1750]

It is very difficult to date these engravings as the artist spent most of his working life producing the estimated nine hundred and ninety-one plates etched by him. Piranesi has been described as the Rembrandt of architecture, and the plates shown are some of his masterpieces.

CASE 8: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Tasso, Torquato. La Gerusalemme liberata. Venezia : G. Albrizzi, 1745.

This magnificent edition of Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata is considered a landmark in the history of Italian printing. When the publisher, Giovanni Battista Albrizzi of Venice, enlisted the help of Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, the most celebrated artist of the day, interest and enthusiasm were aroused in the Republic of Venice, in Austria and in Hungary. The most prominent persons (including the Doge Grimani), hastened to join the list of subscribers, while Maria Theresa was pleased to have the work dedicated to her and allowed a full page portrait of herself to appear after the title-page. Twenty splendid full page plates are each dedicated to a different subscriber and the work abounds in charming and elegant illustrations, head- and tail- pieces and initials, set off by beautiful paper and type. Here is a fine example of collaboration between illustrator and publisher, so close that when Piazzetta died, Albrizzi underwrote the expenses of his funeral.

This copy was given to the Fisher Library by the late Professor Emeritus Beatrice Corrigan in memory of her father.

The exhibition is continued in the four Reading Room cases, where facsimiles of early Italian illuminated manuscripts and other volumes of interest are displayed.

Exhibition: Luba Hussel

Mounted by: Emrys Evans, Linda Joy

Cover: Illustration from Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. [Facsimile] London : Eugrammia Press, 1963.

Design by: Tom Reid.